

of its provisions were included in an amendment included in the reconciliation package. This legislation will increase the likelihood that Medicare beneficiaries will receive a colonoscopy screening examination which is proven to be the most effective way to detect and treat colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the No. 2 cancer killer in the United States today. This year, according to the American Cancer Society, approximately 145,000 new cases will be diagnosed and 56,000 Americans will die from colon cancer. We have the power to change these sobering statistics by increasing access to this lifesaving procedure. Although Congress passed a colonoscopy screening benefit for Medicare beneficiaries back in 1997, the percentage of seniors receiving a colonoscopy reportedly has increased by only an estimated 1 percent. A recent UCLA study, as discussed in an October 11 Wall Street Journal article, documents the continuing underutilization of screening colonoscopies. It points out that colorectal cancer screening rates still lag far behind those for cervical, breast and prostate cancer. As the Wall Street Journal article concludes, "The results were particularly disturbing because 'we could eliminate this disease if America had the will,'" as the study's lead author noted.

One reason for the underutilization of colonoscopy screening in the Medicare population is rapidly declining rates of reimbursement for the procedure. Medicare reimbursement for colonoscopies performed in the outpatient setting has dropped by nearly one-third from the initial 1998 reimbursement rates. In the majority of States today, Medicaid payment rates actually exceed Medicare reimbursement for colonoscopy. This fact alone underscores the Medicare reimbursement problem is real. This legislation increases Medicare reimbursement for colorectal cancer-related procedures to assure more equitable reimbursement for physicians who absorb significant costs in providing these valuable services.

Another reason for this underutilization is that Medicare currently does not pay for a physician office visit prior to a screening colonoscopy, although it does pay for a physician office visit prior to a diagnostic colonoscopy. The procedures are identical—both involve the same amount of risk, so there is simply no reason why Medicare would pay for an office visit prior to one procedure and not the other. Because Medicare does not pay for this necessary office visit, many physicians must provide them for free. This amendment would fix this discrepancy by providing Medicare coverage for a preoperative visit or consultation prior to a screening colonoscopy, as it does for a diagnostic colonoscopy.

Every year, thousands of Americans needlessly die from colorectal cancer. We have the means to change this and we should do so. I appreciate our Sen-

ate colleagues joining in support of this important legislation.

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge National Adoption Day on November 19, 2005. With over 118,000 children available for adoption out of the U.S. foster care system, I think it is crucial to celebrate those lawyers, social workers, officials, and, most importantly, parents who help get many children out of foster homes into adoptive families.

National Adoption Day was started in 2000 by the Alliance for Children's Rights, the Freddie Mac Foundation, and the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and helped complete foster care adoptions in nine jurisdictions. National Adoption Day continued to grow and in 2001 completed adoptions in 17 jurisdictions. In 2002, the Casey Family Services, Children's Action Network, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute and Target became National Adoption Day partners and helped 34 cities across the country finalize 1,350 adoptions. In 2003, 3,100 adoptions were completed. National Adoption Day 2004 was the biggest celebration to date, finalizing the adoptions of more than 3,400 children from foster care. It seems quite appropriate that as we celebrate Thanksgiving, we also celebrate the formation of new families through adoption.

As a member of the bipartisan Congressional Coalition on Adoption, I am committed to assisting children in the United States to find stable, loving and permanent homes. Additionally, I support the goals of National Adoption Day to encourage others to adopt children from foster care, to build stronger ties between local adoption agencies, courts, and adoption advocacy organizations, and to continue to research and learn more about families wanting to adopt and the children waiting to be adopted.

I am also proud that Members of the Senate continue to support ways to make adoption easier and more affordable. Since the cost of adoption can be very high, we ought to do what we can to lessen this initial burden for the exceptional people who provide caring homes for children. Adoption proceedings and legal fees for some domestic adoptions can cost more than \$40,000. To ease some of this burden, Congress adopted a \$10,000 tax credit for adoption expenses. If we ask individuals to care for and adopt children, we must provide some relief from the financial burdens associated with that care. The adoption tax credit is an effective vehicle to provide this relief.

The commitment of adoptive parents in South Dakota and throughout our country to provide children with safe, permanent, and loving homes will, of course, have a positive impact on their lives. As we celebrate National Adoption Day on November 19, 2005, I call on my colleagues to continue supporting

efforts to make adoption easier for parents, children and other important players in the adoption process.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS TYLER R. MACKENZIE

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I want to take a few moments of this body's time to remember a true fallen hero, a Coloradan that has been lost to us in defense of our freedoms.

Last week, on Veterans' Day, the family of PFC Tyler R. Mackenzie buried him back home in Weld County. A native of Evans, CO, Private First Class Mackenzie was killed in early November near Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated near his Humvee. He was only 20 years old, taken from his family and friends just a few days shy of his 21st birthday.

Tyler was a tower of a young man, a six-foot-seven-inch high school football player at Greeley West High School. Tyler's coaches remember him for having held himself to the highest standards and being his own toughest critic. He enjoyed the horticulture classes at Greeley West. He expected excellence from himself and refused to accept anything less.

After graduating Greeley West in 2003, Tyler went to work at his family's business, manufacturing kitchen cabinets. He also worked for the Greeley-Evans School District 6.

Tyler was a man of faith, active in his church. Tyler also had a sense of humor, and his older sister used to call him "Monkey" for his ability to climb across the rafters of the family's basement.

But seeking something else, perhaps a larger opportunity to give back to this Nation, Tyler joined the Army in January of this year. He became a member of the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the storied 101st Airborne Division that bravely halted the march of tyranny across Europe during World War II. Private First Class Mackenzie was following a long tradition of military service in his family: his two grandfathers had served in the Navy during World War II, and his father had served as a military police officer with the Army.

Private First Class Mackenzie completed basic training in May of this year and was deployed to Iraq on September 28. He had been in Iraq only 6 weeks before his tragic death.

Tyler is exactly the kind of young man we as a Nation are so fortunate to have serving in our Armed Forces. He was a young man of intellect, self-discipline, courage and concern. He joined the Army because he wanted to help, to serve his country as his father and grandfathers and so many others had before him. He wanted to ensure that Iraqis knew the full blessings of their new freedom and could share the same opportunities he had here.

Tyler's sacrifice on behalf of this Nation is a reminder to all of us of the